

WASHINGTON - Congressman Spencer Bachus (AL-6) and State Representative Cam Ward stressed the need for more research and additional services for families during an autism briefing held on Capitol Hill today.

Bachus hosted the briefing to provide an update on current autism research and highlight innovative approaches that states are using to serve children and adults with autism.

The Centers for Disease Control estimates that autism affects 1 in every 150 children in the United States. According to the Autism Society of America, the lifetime cost of caring for an individual with autism is between \$3 million and \$3.5 million.

Congressman Bachus said, "There is an increasing incidence of autism and it's something that these children will have for their entire lives. It's a real challenge for those of us in public service, as well in the private sector, to respond appropriately.

We heard encouraging news today from the National Institutes of Health and from our state leaders and it's important for families dealing with autism to know that progress is being made."

Representative Ward, Chairman of the Alabama Autism Task Force, said, “We are really focused on the service side of the issue in Alabama. What we are trying to do more than anything is establish a regional center concept that will provide people with speech and occupational therapies and also give them the opportunity for diagnosis and other therapies they may not otherwise have at home.”

Speakers at the briefing included Dr. Thomas Insel, the Director of the National Institutes of Mental Health; former Pennsylvania State House Speaker Dennis O'Brien; Nina Wall-Cote, Director of the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare's Bureau of Autism Services; and Representative Ward.

Linda Bachus served as moderator.

Congressman Mike Doyle (PA-14), Chairman of the Congressional Autism Caucus, attended and delivered remarks. Bachus is a member of the caucus, which works to promote autism awareness and related legislation among Members of Congress.